



County of Santa Barbara
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

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Kathy M. Gallagher
Director

February 11, 2010

Santa Barbara County Grand Jury
1100 Anacapa St.
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Dear Members of the Grand Jury:

This is in response to your letter of December 29, 2009 in which you request an update on Recommendation #1 as contained in the 2007-08 Civil Grand Jury Report entitled "Child Welfare Services, A System of Care That Lacks Stability."

In further analyzing both the Grand Jury's recommendation and the Department's response, the Department continues to concur that creating stability in the life of those we serve is a goal to be sought by the agency. Placement stability and minimizing case transfer is desirable.

The challenges to accomplish these goals however, continue to exist. As stated in the Department's initial response, the role of the social worker would dramatically change from securing or brokering services to becoming the service provider. This change of role/change of practice requires a significantly reduced caseload, which can only be accomplished through the hiring of more social workers. Due to the current budget state, hiring more social workers is not possible. One of the obstacles continues to be insufficient state and federal funding. This obstacle will continue for the foreseeable future.

The current system, which allows staff to specialize in the various functions of the Child Welfare System, enhances client services and achieves greater compliance with court directives, the Welfare and Institutions Code parameters, and the Federal/State outcome measures promoting the safety, permanency, and well-being of those children served by Child Welfare. Whenever possible, we have combined functions to minimize the moving of families from one social worker to another.

Minimizing the number of workers for a family requires an extensive and comprehensive skill set. CWS has become more complex and the training requirements continue to increase. Requiring all staff, irrespective of their experience, to possess and remain current in the full array of skills needed to manage a family from initial contact to exiting the system remains an unrealistic expectation. The present system, which includes case transfer at key points in the life of the case, promotes efficiency, accountability and customer service. Court-Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) is an integral partner in providing the continuity for the

Terrie Concellos, M.B.A., C.P.A.
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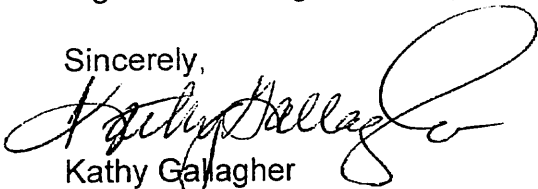
Delfino Neira, MA
Deputy Director
Social Services Programs

Ken D. Jensen, Psy. D.
Deputy Director
Client Services & Benefits

child that our system lacks. We encourage a close working relationship between our social workers and the CASA volunteers.

We continue to strive for improved processes and equitable workload assignments with the goal of improving services and outcomes for our clients. While not the system that we all desire, we are operating within State and Federal guidelines and are consistent with the practices in other counties in organizing the social worker functions and in adhering to the regulations that govern the practice of Child Welfare Services.

Sincerely,



Kathy Gallagher
Director

cc: Janet Wolf, Chair, Board of Supervisors
Terri Maus-Nisich, Assistant County Executive Officer